

Boston Water Works: Roxbury Standpipe  
Fort Avenue, Highland Park  
Boston (Roxbury)  
Suffolk County  
Massachusetts

HAER No. MA-25

HAER  
MASS,  
13-BOST,  
76 -

PHOTOGRAPH

HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: Fort Avenue, Highland Park  
Boston (Roxbury), Suffolk County, Massachusetts

UTM: 19.327350.4687790  
Quad: Boston South

Date of Construction: 1870

Builder/Designer: Standish and Woodbury

Original Use: Water storage

Present Use: Not in use

Present Owner: City of Boston

Significance: The annexation of Roxbury to Boston on January 6, 1868, rendered a high-service water supply system necessary. Previously, Boston had been supplied by a gravity-flow system from the Brookline Reservoir. Based on an examination of other city water supplies, the Water Board decided to adopt the "Stand-pipe System." Standpipes were still relatively uncommon among city water-supply systems, and the 80-foot iron water tower erected in Highland Park was probably the earliest standpipe to be erected in the Boston area, if not in the state. The "Old Fort Lot," so called, of Revolutionary War fame, was chosen as the site, despite the protests of a number of citizens that the place should be preserved as an historic relic. The works, including a pumping station at Elmwood and Roxbury Streets, were put into operation on February 25, 1870. Success of the system led to applications for high service from South Boston and Dorchester. Future annexations, it was expected, would greatly increase the high-service area. To serve these needs, the City Engineer proposed a new high-service pumping station at Chestnut Hill. With the completion of the new station,

the Roxbury Standpipe was abandoned after only ten years of service. The standpipe consists of a boiler-plate iron shell, 5 feet in diameter and 80 feet in height. The pipe was enclosed in an elaborate brick tower in the Gothic style designed by Standish and Woodbury. Between the interior pipe and the outer wall, there is a 3-foot space occupied by a spiral staircase leading to a lookout at the top. In 1907, an iron balcony, now removed, was added to the standpipe, and for several years, it was a popular observation tower.

References:

NR; FitzGerald, Desmond, History of the Boston Water Works from 1868 to 1876 (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, 1876), pp. 145-160

Transmitted by:

Jean P. Yearby, 1984, from data compiled by Peter Stott

ADDENDUM TO  
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Boston  
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